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House of Representatives

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore [Mr. BONILLA]

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

March 21, 1995.

I hereby designate the Honorable HENRY BONILLA to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

NEWT GINGRICH,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING BUSINESS

The SPEAKER. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 4, 1995, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member except the majority and minority leaders limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Guam [Mr. UNDERWOOD] for 5 minutes.

RESOLUTION BARRING ELIMINATION OR CUT OF COMMISSARY AND EXCHANGE SERVICES

Mr. UNDERWOOD. Mr. Speaker, next month the Contract With America will reach its 100-day conclusion. At a time when Congress is acting on this contract, I rise to discuss another more enduring and longstanding contract with our active and retired members of the Armed Forces. Under this contract, the Government has agreed to provide commissary and exchange services to active and retired uniformed men and women as a form of indirect pay for

their service and sacrifice. This contract has lasted more than 100 days. In fact, the commissary system dates back to 1825 when it was provided to service military personnel at remote posts where provisions were very expensive. Recent proposals to reduce or eliminate commissary and exchange services would jeopardize this contract.

Today I am introducing a concurrent resolution that will send a message that any elimination or cut in the commissary and exchange systems would be a breach of faith with our active and retired men and women in uniform and that if any reduction is enacted, then other forms of compensation should be paid to offset this loss.

The Department of Defense commissary and exchange system are proven parts of the military compensation package and contribute significantly to the morale and well-being of our men and women in uniform and their families. It is critical in retaining experienced members, it is valuable in recruiting new members, and reduces expenditures by the Federal Government for training and recruiting or for direct compensation which would have to be increased in order to maintain the same retention rate.

Commissaries and exchanges are critical in recruiting and retaining quality personnel and continue to be highlighted as a valuable aspect of military service. Among Armed Forces personnel, commissary privileges consistently rank among the top three benefits of military service, particularly among married personnel, and is one of the major factors in a service member's decision to remain in the armed services. The patron base includes 12 million individuals including active duty military, military retirees, selected and ready reserves, Medal of Honor recipients, 100-percent-disabled veterans, overseas civil service, and all their dependents.

For many of my constituents on Guam and for service men and women throughout the Nation, commissaries and exchanges translate into indirect pay for military families. A reduction would also translate into an erosion for many of quality-of-life facilities available to these individuals and their families. Profits from the exchange system are used to support many quality-of-life improvements such as the operation of youth centers, arts and crafts centers, recreational areas, and child development centers. Eliminating this exchange dividend would result in reductions in the quality-of-life facilities available to our armed services at a time when there have been many concerns raised about these issues.

The resolution that I am introducing today expresses the sense of Congress that first, if the commissary and exchange systems of the DOD are reduced or eliminated, the funds derived from the reduction or elimination should be used to increase other forms of compensation for current and retired members of the Armed Forces.

Second, the resolution states that if exchange stores are reduced or eliminated, funds should be provided by the Department of Defense to upgrade and avoid the erosion of morale, welfare and recreation activities, and other quality-of-life facilities provided to military personnel. The resolution ensures that the indirect pay on which service men and women rely will not be reduced and that the quality-of-life improvements on which the current system relies will not be eroded.

Most importantly, this resolution sends the message that a reduction in commissary and exchange systems would be a breach of faith in current and retired members who have earned this indirect pay through years of faithful service.

Let's make sure that we don't breach the more longstanding contract that

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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all of us have with active and retired members of the Armed Forces. I invite and urge my colleagues to cosponsor this important resolution and to join me in support of our men and women in uniform.

Mr. VOLKMER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. UNDERWOOD. I yield to the gentleman from Missouri.

Mr. VOLKMER. I would be glad to join with the gentleman in his resolution. I know that probably one of the reasons that we see this type of resolution coming forward is concern with what is going on as far as budgetary cuts that are occurring here in the Congress at this time by the majority party; is that correct?

Mr. UNDERWOOD. That is correct.

Mr. VOLKMER. We have seen a proposal that we saw in the defense rescissions bill that will cut back severely on veterans who have served this country in the past, to cut back medical care facilities for veterans that was proposed by the majority party; correct?

Mr. UNDERWOOD. That was correct, in last week's rescission bill. I urge all Members to cosponsor this resolution.

AMENDMENT PROHIBITING DESECRATION OF OLD GLORY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from New York [Mr. SOLOMON] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. SOLOMON. I would love to respond to the last statement, but I will wait.

Mr. Speaker, today I will be introducing a resolution calling for a constitutional amendment prohibiting the physical desecration of the American flag. I am happy to say that this effort has received wide support from my friends and colleagues on both sides of the aisle in both Houses of Congress, including my good friend SONNY MONTGOMERY standing over here, Senator ORRIN HATCH over in the Senate, as well as Senator HOWELL HEFLIN on a bipartisan basis. In fact, over 240 Representatives and 40 Senators have already answered the call to protect this our greatest national symbol, Old Glory.

I would like to emphasize, Mr. Speaker, the surge of support to extend this needed protection for the flag comes not in response to changes which have occurred inside the beltway but in response to a massive grassroots movement from across this Nation, all as well it should have been. In fact, 46 State legislatures have already passed resolutions asking Congress to allow them the chance to ratify this amendment.

Mr. Speaker, at 3 o'clock this afternoon, I will drop that constitutional amendment in the hopper over here and there will be a press conference out in the grassy triangle on the Senate side of the Capitol, where those of us who support this badly needed con-

stitutional amendment will answer questions from the press.

At this time, I would like to yield to a truly great American. He is a Democrat on that side of the aisle, but he stands up for America's veterans and for the armed services.

Mr. MONTGOMERY. I thank very much the gentleman yielding to me. I certainly support very much the American flag amendment that the gentleman from New York will drop in the hopper at 3 o'clock. As the chairman of the Committee on Rules mentioned, we have 242 members who have signed up on the House side to sponsor this. We need 48 more Members to get the 290 when we do get the opportunity to bring this constitutional amendment resolution up that it will have a chance to pass.

I would like to thank the gentleman from Texas, Mr. GENE GREEN, a Member of Congress, who has been getting Democrats on this side of the aisle to sign that resolution. As the gentleman from New York said, it is nonpartisan. It comes about that we did pass a simple law in the Congress and signed by President Bush that said you cannot hurt this great American flag. This was turned down by the U.S. Supreme Court who said Congress does not have that authority.

So it becomes now to protect the flag. We have all the veterans organizations totally supporting this amendment. I stand right with the gentleman, side by side. We need to get this constitutional amendment. We need to get more signees on this side of the Capitol to be darned sure. We lost some of them last time as the gentleman remembers. We had over 290 signatures on the House side. When we brought the amendment up, we lost some and we did not pass it. We do not want that to happen this time.

Mr. SOLOMON. The gentleman is so right. He always does stand up for America. It is a crime today to destroy this dollar bill, it is a crime today to desecrate the Washington Monument. It is not a crime to desecrate Old Glory. That is a crime in itself. We are going to change that. I thank the gentleman and urge everyone to sponsor this constitutional amendment. We will have 290 votes in the very near future and Members ought to be an original cosponsor of the legislation.

You can be so if you sign on before 3 o'clock this afternoon.

WELFARE REFORM IS ASSAULT ON POOR

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from Massachusetts [Mr. FRANK] is recognized during morning business for 5 minutes.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Speaker, I too hope that the Members today and this week will stand up for America, that they will stand up for an America that has a sense of respon-

sibility and compassion and the wisdom not to panic.

We have got some economic problems brought about by the changing nature of work which puts people without technological skills at something of a disadvantage, exacerbated by the increasing integration of the international economy. Those are things that we ought to be addressing.

But what the public is being offered by the Republican Party is an alternative explanation for that. It is a form of scapegoating. Working Americans who have found their economic futures insecure are being told it is the fault of those poor people and those immigrants and those women who keep having children so they can make the few bucks you get on AFDC.

In pursuit of that, what we will have this week brought forward by the Republican Party is an assault on people who are poor, who lack education, who lack skills, and most of all we will have an assault on children.

What we get in American politics today is a very selective quoting of the Bible. The part that says you shall not visit the sins of the parents on the children apparently has been written out of the editions of many people, because we are being told that children who make the terrible mistake of being born in the wrong circumstance, children who make the bad judgment to have a mother who was not married, will pay for that. Those children will see basic sustenance denied to them. The answer of our Republican friends is, "Oh, no, no, we're not going to cut that," although in fact they are cutting it "What we are doing is returning it to the States."

Well, understand one very important point. When there is a program which is important to the Republican Party, they federalize it. When we are talking about issues that the Republican Party or its major constituencies in the corporate community feel strongly about, they bring them to the Federal level. Where we have an issue which is not one that they favor, it gets sent back to the States with less money and in circumstances that invite the States to reduce things further. There will be no safeguards, there will be no requirements.

Today if you are a child born in those kind of circumstances, your lot is not going to be a happy one. The young child born to a single mother is those kind of circumstances will live a life that no child in America ought to live. And what is the response of the people on the other side? Let's make it worse. Let's penalize that family in the hopes that there will not be so many families like that in the future.

That is why a very wide range of organizations, religious groups, advocacy groups of various sorts are so unhappy with this.

Let's again be clear. The Republican Party says "Oh, no, we're just returning it to the States." When it came to prisons and how to sentence criminals,